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FORMER LOBBYIST NEIL VOLZ PLEADS GUILTY TO CORRUPTION AND FRAUD CONSPIRACY

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Former lobbyist Neil G. Volz has pleaded guilty to a charge of conspiring with Jack Abramoff, Michael Scanlon, Tony Rudy and others to commit honest services fraud and to violate the federal one-year lobbying ban, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division announced today.

Volz, 35, entered his plea today in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, before Judge Ellen Segal Huvelle. Under the terms of a plea agreement, Volz faces up to five years in prison, a fine of \$250,000, and supervised release following his incarceration. Volz has agreed to cooperate with law enforcement officials in the ongoing investigation. Volz's named co-conspirators, Jack Abramoff, Michael Scanlon, and Tony Rudy, have previously pled guilty in this investigation and are cooperating with law enforcement officials.

According to the plea agreement signed by Volz, from 1995 through February 2002, he was employed by a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, described as Representative #1. In 1998, Volz became chief of staff. In January 2001, Volz also became staff director of a House Committee when Representative #1 became the chairman of a Congressional Committee. In February 2002, Volz left the House and joined Abramoff as a lobbyist in the Washington D.C. office of a law and lobbying firm. In the plea agreement, Volz admitted that beginning in approximately 2000 and continuing throughout his time as the chief of staff in Representative #1's office and as Committee staff director, Volz corruptly accepted a stream of things of value from Abramoff and others while he took official action on their behalf. Volz concealed his receipt of this largesse, which was in excess of the limits established by the House of Representatives, by failing to disclose the gifts on his annual financial disclosure forms. Once Volz became a lobbyist with Abramoff, Volz's role in the conspiracy changed to providing a stream of things of value to other public officials, including Representative #1.

Volz also admitted that, when he became a lobbyist, he, Abramoff, Scanlon, Rudy and others continued to engage in an honest services fraud scheme by providing a stream of things of value to other public officials with the intent to influence and reward official action. The plea agreement and information set forth examples of such conduct, namely the provision by Volz and his co-conspirators of a stream of things of value to Representative #1 and members of his staff in order to influence them to take official action. According to Volz's plea, the stream of benefits included foreign and domestic travel, numerous tickets to concerts and sporting events, regular meals and drinks at expensive restaurants, and unreported use of Abramoff's box suites at the MCI Center Arena and Camden Yards Stadium for political fund raisers.

For example, Volz admitted that the co-conspirators provided Representative #1 and members of his staff with all-expenses-paid and reduced-price trips to Scotland and London in August 2002; to the Fiesta Bowl in Tempe, Arizona, in January 2003; to New Orleans,

Louisiana, in May 2003; and to Lake George, New York, in 2004. In exchange for this stream of things of value, Volz and his co-conspirators sought and received Representative #1's agreement to perform a series of official acts, including Representative #1's agreement to support and pass legislation, to support or oppose actions taken by other agencies and departments of government, and to assist Abramoff in securing additional clients. The plea papers allege that in March 2002, Representative #1 agreed that, as the Co-Chairman of a Conference Committee of House and Senate Members of Congress, he would introduce and seek passage of legislation to lift a federal ban against gaming by a client of Abramoff, a Native American Tribe in Texas.

"Neil Volz admits his part in the conspiracy to corruptly influence public officials in return for official acts – both when he was a public official and when he was a lobbyist," said Assistant Attorney General Fisher. "Americans have the right to expect a government free from corruption. The Department of Justice will continue to work on behalf of the American people to ensure honesty and integrity in government by enforcing the criminal laws against public corruption."

As part of the scheme described in the information and plea agreement, Volz also admitted that, as a lobbyist working for Abramoff, he violated the federal one-year lobbying ban by lobbying Representative #1 as well as staff members in the office of Representative #1 and the Committee staff he had previously supervised, all within one year of having left his positions in the House of Representatives.

This case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorneys Mary K. Butler and M. Kendall Day of the Public Integrity Section, which is headed by Acting Chief Andrew C. Lourie; and Guy D. Singer and Nathaniel B. Edmonds of the Fraud Section, which is headed by Acting Chief Paul E. Pelletier. The case is being investigated by a task force of federal agents including Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of the Interior Office of the Inspector General, the General Services Administration Office of Inspector General, and the Criminal Investigation branch of the Internal Revenue Service. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida also participated in the investigation.

The same task force and Justice Department offices are prosecuting the case of *United States v. David H. Safavian*, the former Chief of Staff for the General Services Administration, who was indicted in the District of Columbia in October 2005.

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